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Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5466th meeting

Friday, 16 June 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Løj	(Denmark)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Okio
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Afriyie
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Slovakia	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hoare
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the head of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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06-39099 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the head of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, head of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, head of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. de La Sablière (*spoke in French*): This was the seventh visit of the Security Council to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It took place just a few weeks prior to a historic event, namely, the presidential and legislative elections of 30 July, which will mark the end of the transition.

The support demonstrated by the Security Council by its presence there this year was justified by the importance of what is at stake and by our resolve to give the Congolese people our fullest support so that the elections can be truly successful — that is, well-organized, free, transparent and credible. Above and beyond the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the success of this important phase of Congolese recovery should affect the stability of the whole region, and possibly even the continent, for this country at the heart of Africa is significant because of its size, its population and its natural resources.

It was therefore natural that by our presence we signalled support for the considerable work being done by Bill Swing and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which is involved in support operations for the most important elections ever carried out by the United Nations.

Our visit, I believe, was useful and busy. The latter is clear from the programme — meetings with the President, the four Vice-Presidents, the Independent Electoral Commission, the High Media Authority, the political parties and the churches; contacts with Congolese officials in the security area and their international support, in particular the European Union security sector reform mission (EUSEC), EU Police Mission (EUPOL) and EU military operation in the Democratic Republic in the Congo (EUFOR); the Bretton Woods institutions, the business world, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and, of course, the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT) and various representatives of MONUC.

This choice for a very busy visit was made so that we could engage in a fruitful dialogue with all the officials concerned, send a clear message about our expectations and gain greater knowledge about this country so important for Africa, where the presence of the United Nations should be maintained for some time after the elections, in partnership with the Congolese people and authorities.

Our first concern, then, was the success of free elections, the first in 45 years. I do not underestimate the technical problems that may arise here and there, in view of the sophisticated nature of the electoral system chosen by the Assembly and the size of the country and its communications problems. It seems to us — I believe that I reflect the views of the mission — that the engagement is such, the measures put in place are so significant and organized, and the work already accomplished by the Independent Electoral Commission and MONUC is so professional that we have every assurance that the Congolese people will be able to vote under good conditions on 30 July. Council members stated time and again that that date must be maintained.

Free and successful elections also presuppose sufficient security. It is true that violent incidents continue in the east, in Ituri — for example, the hostage-taking of Nepalese soldiers, which we brought up at the appropriate time. I would add that the armed groups — including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda — have not been fully controlled in Kivu, but these groups and the violent incidents that I mentioned are not likely to significantly disrupt the elections. Everyone agreed on that. In addition, the police training programmes have been well run; 50,000

police officers will take part in the security for the elections. The use of the army will thus be reduced to a minimum and limited to some unstable areas.

Finally, the establishment of a European standby reserve force, authorized by the Security Council and prepared to intervene in support of MONUC, is an additional serious guarantee. That initiative, taken by the Secretary-General, is an excellent one. I believe that we should welcome the broad and diversified support provided to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for this electoral period by the European Union and other countries. To summarize briefly, I would say that in terms of security, I believe we can also be reassured.

Throughout our visit, we emphasized that the elections must be free, transparent and fair. To all our interlocutors, beginning with the President and the Vice-President, we said that the blunders in the pre-election campaign — particularly in the media, which conveyed messages of exclusion and division on the subject of "Congoleseness" — and the personal attacks must be redressed. We stressed the tragic consequences that such messages had recently elsewhere on the continent. The President shared our concern, and more generally, all our interlocutors told us — some more forcefully than others — that they recognized the need to calm people down and to conduct a campaign that was more worthy of a democratic debate.

Likewise, we stressed the need to provide the less important candidates and parties with the necessary access to the media, particularly radio. This problem, which was raised by the High Media Authority and does not require a significant amount of resources to resolve, must be addressed. Here also, we received responses that seemed to justify our concerns. However, we will have to continue to monitor the situation, in particular through what the CIAT will tell us. A number of serious acts of intimidation do not spare journalists or even some candidates. Such acts must stop. Even if they perhaps are of minor significance, it is important to be firm with the interlocutors.

Lastly, it is essential that there be an awareness that the country must continue to be governed and administered during the period between the first round of elections and the establishment of the institutions. We made our interlocutors aware of that problem. I would add that it would be desirable to make that period as short as possible, while respecting texts and technical restraints. On the whole, it seems to us that even if we accurately assess the task and the risks of blunders, we can be reasonably confident. To use an image, I would say that the train is on the tracks; now it has to arrive at the station.

The Congolese people, who have registered in a great national movement to vote and who endorsed the constitution in massive numbers by referendum, deserve these elections. The pressure applied to make sure that they take place under good circumstances is also a fundamental factor that must be taken into account. It is a major responsibility for the Congolese political class, but it is also a very important responsibility for the international community, which is helping the Congolese people.

But, as the Security Council often emphasizes in its statements, elections are not an end in themselves; they are a phase. The people have considerable expectations, and it is important that they perceive a change, which must also be long-term. That is why we greatly stressed the need not only to preserve what has been achieved, but to ensure that it can be fully consolidated and enhanced by the legitimacy provided by the elections and by a uniting of energies after the elections. That is to say, the winners must be generous, and the losers must accept the choice of the voters — the verdict of the elections.

Above all, we must not enter into the political debate, which is not the responsibility of the Security Council and the international community. But we can remind people that inclusiveness will be extremely desirable after the elections so that the Congolese can deal with the many priorities ahead of them. Among those priorities, there are three that we constantly mentioned.

First is the swift completion of the effort to form an integrated and professional national army, which should be of a reasonable size to carry out its missions and should be properly equipped and paid. The elected President and the Government must give priority to that objective, and the international community, in partnership with them, must be better organized than it is today to provide its vital support. I must say that everyone agreed on that objective.

The second priority is resolving the vexing and persistent problem of armed groups in the east. That task must be accomplished. First, it is essential for the

people; it is also important for good relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours, who must also cooperate. In that regard, we welcome the fact that the relationship with Rwanda has very much improved.

Finally, the Congolese must improve the administration of the State. The country's resources are such that they should produce the income necessary to bring the people the prosperity that they are entitled to expect.

The international community, including the Security Council, is now strongly mobilized to help the Congolese people. After the elections, we should remain at their side. We assured them, on behalf of the Council, that that was also part of our message.

In conclusion, I should like to say that I think this Security Council mission — which was very united, and I thank all our colleagues who participated in it — was well received. I believe that that also attests to the kind of excellent work carried out by MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I thank Ambassador de La Sablière for his briefing.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.